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Message Text

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13
ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-11 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

SP-03 DRC-01 /071 W
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R 050704Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3781

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5071

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, IS
SUBJECT: PUBLIC SECTOR LABOR DISPUTES

1. SUMMARY: IMPACT OF RECENT STRIKES AND SLOWDOWNS, PARTICULARLY BY EL-AL MAINTENANCE WORKERS, PLACES GOI UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE TO SEEK SOLUTION TO PROBLEM OF INSULATING ESSENTAIL SERVICES FROM DISRUPTIVE LABOR DISPUTES. END SUMMARY.

2. RECENT SPATE OF LABOR DISPUTES IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES HAS PRODUCED SHARP PUBLIC REACTION, INCLUDING KNESSET DEBATE SCHEDULED FOR SEPT 9 AT REQUEST OF MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES.

3. REQUEST FOR SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION TRIGGERED BY A 24-HOUR ILLEGAL WILDCAT STRIKE OF EL-AL MAINTENANCE WORKERS AUGUST 26, DEMANDING INCREASED WAGE SCALE. WORKERS LATER RESORTED TO SLOW-DOWN TACTIS AND ADDITONAL BRIEF STRIKE SEPTEMBR 1 BEFORE RETURNING TO NORMAL WORK AFTER INTERVENTION OF TRANSPORT MINISTER WHO CUT SHORT EUROPEAN VISIT TO HELP RESOLVE DISPUTE.

4. OTHER MAJOR DISPTUES STILL UNDERWAY, ALL INVOLVING WAGE ISSUES, INCLUDE SANCTIONS BY TEL AVIV POSTAL WORKERS HANDLING TELEGRAMS AND RADIO AND TELEVISION TECHNICIANS. SEVERAL OTHER
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DISPUTES OF MINOR CHARACTER ALSO REPORTED IN PRESS.

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5. EL-AL DISPUTE OF COURSE WAS MOST DISRUPTIVE, WITH COMPANY LOSING SEVERAL MILLION POUNDS AND INCURRING WRATH OF SEVERAL THOUSAND PASSENGERS AS RESULT CANCELLED AND DELAYED FLIGHT SCHEDULES. SOME 10,000 TELEGRAMS REPORTEDLY NOT DELIVERED AS RESULT POSTAL WORKERS SANCTIONS, WHILE RADIO AND TELEVISION HAVE REDUCED PROGRAM SCHEDULING OVER PAST MONTH.

6. COMMENT: VARIOUS STRIKES DO NOTREFLECT SERIOUS EROSION IN GENERAL HISTADRUT POLICY OF WAGE RESTRAINT DURING CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUAMION. HISTADRUT HAS NOT SUPPORTED WAGE DEMANDS, BUT AT SAME TIME HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO CURB ACTIONS BY WORKERS COMMITTEES AT LOCAL LEVEL IN VIOLATION OF HISTADRUT AUTHORITY. STRIKES MAINLY REFLECT LONG-STANDING PATTERN OF ISRAELI WORKERS IN STRATEGIC POSITIONS RESORTING TO ILLEGAL STRIKES AND SANCTIONS TO EXTRACT ADDITIONAL PAY. SUCH STRIKES ARE MOST PREVALENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR, WHERE COMPLEX LABOR RELATIONS PROCEDURES AND BUDGETARY RESTRAINTS TEND TO DELAY DECISIONS. TRADITIONAL LINKAGE OF VARIOUS PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY SCALES MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO ADJUST SALARY SCALES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS, REGARDLESS OF MERITS OF CASE, WITHOUT GENERATING FURTHER DEMANDS BY OTHER GROUPS.

7. ISRAELI WORKERS NO DOUBT AWARE OF ECONOMIC AND SECURITY SITUATION IN COUNTRY, BUT SHORT OF WAR OR IMMINENT THREATS, THEY MOST LIKELY WILL PERSIST IN EFFORTS TO RECTIFY SENSE OF GRIEVANCES. GOI, FACING HIGHLY ORGANIZED AND SOMETIMES MILITANT WORKFORCE, HAS BEEN CONFRONTED WITH PERENIAL PROBLEM OF WORK STOPPAGES IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES. CHAOS CAUSED BY RECENT EL-AL STRIKE HAS GALVANIZED PUBLIC OPINION AND NO DOUBT WILL CAUSE GOVERNMENT AND HISTADRUT ONCE AGAIN TO RE-EXAMINE LABOR RELATIONS PROCEDURES IN PUBLIC SERVICE.
VELIOTES

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